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- ART. VI.—1. *Ueber gelehrte Tradition im Alterthume, besonders in Indien, etc.* [*On Learned Tradition in Antiquity, especially in India.* Read on the 28th of September, 1865, before the Meeting of Orientalists at Heidelberg, by PROFESSOR R. ROTH; and published in the Journal of the German Oriental Society. (Leipzig. 1867.) Vol. XXI. pp. 1–9.]
2. *On the Interpretation of the Veda.* By J. MUIR, Esq. [From the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. (London. 1866.) Vol. II. pp. 303–402.]
3. *The Hymns of the Gaupāyanas and the Legend of King Asamāti.* By PROFESSOR MAX MÜLLER. [From the Same. pp. 426–479.]
4. *On the Veda of the Hindus and the Veda of “the German School.”* [Read on the 7th of January, 1867, before the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, by PROFESSOR TH. GOLDSTÜCKER, and reported in Abstract in the London Examiner for February 2, 1867.]

AMONG the many important tasks which are occupying the attention of philologists at the present day, there is hardly another more urgent than that of translating the Veda, the sacred scripture of the Hindus. Remote as it may seem to us in many respects,—its place of origin separated from us by half the circumference of the globe, its time by more than half the distance back to the currently accepted birth-year of man, its doctrines by an equal part of the course of human progress from savage atheism to a true morality and religion,—this book, nevertheless, has attributes which bring it within the circle of our nearer interests. For it is an historical record belonging to our own division of the human race; and being such, its very remoteness gives it an added claim to our attention. It is far from us in the direction from which we ourselves have come; it tells of conditions through which our ancestors passed, and of which other knowledge is denied us. It is the oldest existing document composed by any Indo-European people, older than the Zoroastrian scriptures, many centuries older than the chants of Homer, and unapproached even

by the traditions of the other branches of the family. This chronological antiquity would, no doubt, be of little account, if not supported by a corresponding antiquity of language and content. But it is thus supported. The idiom of the Veda is the least altered representative of that primeval tongue from which are descended the dialects of the leading races of Europe and Asia, all the way from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the Bay of Bengal. And while the scene of action of the Veda is laid in India, the conditions and manners depicted in it are, nevertheless, of a character which seems more Indo-European than Indian. Almost all that to our apprehension constitutes the peculiarity of Hindu institutions—the triad of great gods, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, the doctrine of transmigration, the system of castes, the mixture of subtile pantheistic philosophy and gross superstition—is wanting there. The Nature-worship, the transparent mythology, the simple social relations of the Vedic period in India cast hardly less light upon the beginnings of religion and society among the primitive nations of Europe than upon the Brahmanic constitution of the later days of Hindustan. At the same time, the Veda contains the actual germs, as yet undeveloped, of the whole Brahmanic system, which can be understood only as they and its relations to them are comprehended. Whether, then, we apply ourselves to the study of Indian or of Indo-European antiquity, this book is our equally indispensable guide and aid.

By the term *Veda*, literally ‘knowledge,’ is sometimes designated the whole immense mass of the earlier religious literature, metrical and prosaic, of India, representing several distinct and diverse periods of belief and culture. This is not the sense in which we here employ the word. The literature referred to is divided into four bodies of works, entitled respectively the *Rig-Veda*, ‘Veda of Hymns,’ the *Sama-Veda*, ‘Veda of Chants,’ the *Yajur-Veda*, ‘Veda of Sacrificial Formulas,’ and the *Brahma-Veda*, ‘Veda of Incantations,’—the last being more usually styled *Atharva-Veda*, from the half-mythic race of the Atharvans, with whom it is brought into some kind of artificial connection. Of each of these bodies a single work, containing matter chiefly poetic, forms the original nucleus, to which all the rest has become attached by gradual accretion.

And the collection of hymns constituting the Rig-Veda proper, in this narrower sense, so far outranks the others in importance as to be, in our view, almost by itself *the VEDA*. It contains the earliest sacred poetry of the Hindus, produced at a time when they had as yet hardly begun to be Hindus, when, having but lately entered the peninsula at its northwestern frontier, they were pressing forward through the Punjab to take possession of the wider and richer valleys of central Hindustan, the principal scene of their later history. Its hymns are the prayers and praises with which that people addressed the gods in whom it believed; they reflect, then, in the first instance, and with most fulness, its religious creed and institutions; but, along with these, more or less unconsciously and fragmentarily, its whole mode of thought and life. They were long handed down with scrupulous care in the families of the priesthood, regarded with reverence, and profoundly studied by generations to whom their language and doctrines were becoming ever more strange; until at length, no one can tell when or where, they were committed to writing, and have reached our hands in a state of complete and accurate preservation which constitutes one of the marvels of literary history, and accompanied with a mass of auxiliary literature, critical and exegetical, which is hardly less marvellous.

The other three collections have, in a less degree, been regarded with the same reverence, and subjected to a like treatment. But while the Rig-Veda was evidently put together for the purpose of gathering and preserving the inherited treasure of ancient song, the next two, at least, have in view more special ends. The Sama and Yajur Vedas are the liturgies or prayer-books of two classes of priests, composed of those passages, selected out of the mass of traditional matter, which were adapted to the needs of practical worship, as organized at a period far subsequent to that of the origin of the hymns; their contents, therefore, are, in much the greater part, repetitions of those of the Rig-Veda. The Atharvan, finally, though not liturgical, but a free historical collection like the first, is of a much later date and spirit, illustrating the transition from the simple faith of the early time to the superstition on the one hand, and the sublimated and attenuated

philosophizing on the other, which characterize the more modern religious development of India.

By the Veda, therefore, as the object of interpretative labor to the present generation of scholars, we mean the Rig-Veda hymns, along with such parts of the other collections as are akin to these in character. The difficulty of their interpretation lies in the obscurity both of their diction and their content. The Vedic dialect is notably unlike the classical Sanskrit, — differing from it in the retention of a variety of grammatical forms which it has lost from use, and also, more especially, in the possession of a vocabulary to no small extent peculiar, containing not only scattered words, but whole bodies of roots and derivatives, which find no place in the later idiom. The difference of condition and sentiment, of the ways of thinking and acting, is even wider than that of speech, between the one period and the other. We have here, in short, one of that class of cases with which the student of ancient history is so often called upon to deal, — a half-known antiquity, recorded in an imperfectly understood dialect; into the full comprehension of both he has to work his way as best he can, making the word explain the thing, and the thing the word, gaining by degrees deeper knowledge and clearer views, until the whole lies in its grand features and more essential details distinct before his mind. Of course, until the Vedic antiquity shall be thoroughly understood, no satisfactory translation of the Veda will be possible; the latter must be the sign and fruit of the former.

For penetrating to the sense of these ancient records we have abundant means, both direct and indirect, in the later language and antiquities of India. The whole accessory sacred literature is, to a certain extent, their comment. The numerous and voluminous *Brahmanas* — regarded by the Hindus as continuations of the hymn-literature itself, and as being like this inspired — are filled with discussions of the divinities and ceremonies to which the hymns relate, with legends bearing upon their subject and occasion, with explanations of the allusions they contain, even with interpretations of their words and phrases. The *Sutras*, or bodies of sacrificial rules, also cast light upon their meaning from the method of their ceremo-

nial application. The *Pratiçakhyas*, and other treatises of a grammatical character, are not destitute of an exegetical as well as a critical value. A single work, of great, though unknown antiquity, the *Nirukta*, or 'Exposition,' of Yaska, takes for its express object the interpretation of difficult parts of the Vedic phraseology. All these are fragmentary or partial in their nature. But about five hundred years ago, in a region of southern India where occurred the most important *renaissance* of Hindu learning and religion after their overwhelming overthrow by the Moslems, there was produced a series of giant commentaries, which follow the sacred texts line by line and word by word, setting clearly forth every item of their contents; and it is as accompanied by these commentaries, which, in the eyes of the modern Hindu, are their sufficient and authoritative exposition, that the texts have been placed in our hands.

It was a matter of course, then, that European scholars, when they began their studies upon the hymns, should take the commentaries as their guides; and by this aid, as no one pretends to deny, they won a much more rapid insight into the general contents of the texts before them than could have been attained in any other way. More recently, however, has arisen a lively discussion as to the absolute value of the commentaries, the age and source of the information they give, and the degree of authority which ought to be ascribed to them. There are those who maintain, in theory, that the traditional explanation given by the Indian exegetes goes back to the period of production of the hymns themselves, or at least to a time when the latter were fully and familiarly comprehended; that it possesses, therefore, a paramount value, and should be, in the main, strictly followed by us; and that, if we would fain understand the Veda, we have only to sit at the feet of Sayana, Mahidhara, and their compeers of the fourteenth century, and what we desire is attained. We possess a translation of the Rig-Veda made upon this theory; it is by Horace Hayman Wilson; the first half of it was published before his death, and Professor Cowell is now editing the rest from his manuscript.

Much the larger number of European scholars, however, have been of a different opinion. Their views are fully set

forth in the first three of the papers which form the subject of this article, and we will proceed to consider them as there presented.

After Colebrooke's remarkable essay on the Vedas (published in 1805) had failed to sow fertile seed in the minds of his contemporaries and followers, and Rosen's isolated enterprise of the publication of the Rig-Veda had been broken off almost in its inception by his untimely death (in 1837), it was Professor Roth of Tübingen who, more than any other person, initiated the present era of Vedic study by his little work entitled "*Contributions to the Literature and History of the Veda*" (*Zur Litteratur und Geschichte des Weda*), of which the first portion was presented to the German Oriental Society in 1845, and which was published in the next year. His opinions upon the point now under discussion have always been clearly held and decidedly stated, and he is generally looked upon as the leading advocate of an independent interpretation. He has most fully expressed himself in its behalf in the Preface to the great Sanskrit Lexicon, of which he and Böhrlingk are the joint editors; as his exegetical principles have been best illustrated in his contributions to that Lexicon, in its explanation of Vedic words and discussion of Vedic passages. His present brief paper offers a summary view of the considerations which have suggested themselves to his mind, in the course of his long-continued occupation with the subject.

He first points out the difficulties which beset the understanding of all works coming down to us from former times, whether near or remote, and the necessity laid upon us of seeking intermediate aids, which shall lead us back step by step to a knowledge of the conditions under which those works were produced. Every ancient literature of any extent and importance, especially every sacred literature, offers such aid, in the form of glossaries, commentaries, and other kindred works. But in every known case, these aids, resting upon the basis of a learned tradition, have been found insufficient, and, to a certain extent, misleading, — and this for reasons which are grounded in the nature of the case, and therefore unavoidable. Investigation, inquiry, the formation of an exegetical tradi-

tion, do not begin until the texts with which they deal have taken on a character of obscurity, are no longer directly intelligible. Not only, now, does the Hindu traditional literature constitute no exception to the general rule, it is even a striking illustration of the rule. The circumstances under which it was produced would lead us to expect to find it thus. The great Vedic commentaries came into being after a time of general decay of Hindu learning, under the patronage of a king of barbarian extraction, and among a people of non-Sanskritic speech. For their construction had been gathered, we may admit, all of Brahmanic learning that was then attainable ; but the learned Pandits who resorted to the court of Vijayanagara could bring nothing with them which they did not already possess ; and in order to show that they were the representatives of an authoritative tradition going back all the way to the Vedic times, it would be necessary to prove that such a tradition could and did exist at that time in India,—the proof being derived either from the known history of Hindu literature and religion, or else from internal evidences contained in the commentaries themselves. The former mode of proof has never been seriously attempted ; it has rather been assumed, that, since the Hindus believe in the authority of the commentaries, we must do the same. This assumption involves a complete misapprehension as to where the burden of proof lies ; the probabilities are on the side of the sceptics, and can only be overborne by direct evidence ; and when we come to look for such evidence in the works in question, we find them, on the contrary, filled with the plainest indications of their true origin. A genuine tradition sets itself to give information which could not be reached by other means ; it explains things, relations, connected passages, rather than single words and petty details. The more primitive it is, the less it will wear a scientific aspect. The scientific exposition, on the other hand, begins with words, and from them tries to arrive at the comprehension of things more general. Of this latter character is the Hindu comment, through and through. It is grammatical and etymological, smacking of the school and the pedant in every part. Artificialities, inconsistencies, conceits, uncertainties, abound in it. It walks with no assured step ; of



difficult passages it gives without scruple a variety of different admissible explanations, leaving the reader to take his own choice among them. It exhibits, in short, no trace of genuine traditional insight.

Nor can the comment even claim to found itself upon a treasure of accumulated learning notably richer than is within our reach. It rarely cites a work which we have not in our own hands, or may not hope to have; and its references to those which we do possess — especially to Yaska's Nirukta, of which we have already spoken — are so very frequent and full as to show, that, so far as ancient authorities are concerned, these were its main dependence.

When, now, we come to examine the oldest authorities themselves, we find them to be of the same character. Yaska, not less than Sayana, endeavors to penetrate by etymological inquiry into the meaning of the passages he is treating; he cites the varying views of his predecessors, among whom there was a euhemeristic school, and also a nihilistic, denying that the Veda had any intelligible and attainable significance. From this and other like evidence it appears clearly that the tradition which is alleged to lie back of the commentators is only a tradition of the earlier attempts of investigators of their own class. There has been, it is true, a long succession of practised exegetes; yet the succession began not in immediate and authoritative knowledge, but in erudite inquiry, resting upon the same basis which underlies our own, — namely, knowledge of the Sanskrit language, and of the institutions and beliefs of the later periods in Indian history.

These are the leading thoughts of Professor Roth's concise, but comprehensive essay. Though bearing primarily upon the Vedic controversy, they were intended also to have an application to the similar question now under debate as to the interpretation of the Avesta.

The next paper is by the eminent English scholar, Dr. Muir of Edinburgh, best known to the reading public by his valuable series of volumes entitled "Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the People of India, their Religion and Institutions," in which are gathered copious and authentic materials for the study of various points in Hindu antiquity,

with full translations and explanatory remarks. The paper, though published before that of Professor Roth, comes after it in the order of composition and presentation to the learned body before which it was read. It takes up the same theme at much greater length, not limiting itself to a statement of principles and results, but establishing the one and deriving the other by means of a full array of evidence extracted from the works whose value is the subject of controversy. Dr. Muir's whole exposition is characterized by the most unexceptionable fairness and courtesy, by wide reading and industry of research, and by clearness of statement and logical method. It is a contribution to the discussion of very high value, and especially interesting to those who, themselves unversed in Vedic study, require to have things placed before their eyes in the light of an abundant illustration. Its force as an argument appears to us, we must acknowledge, overwhelming; we see not how those who maintain the paramount authority of the commentators can meet its reasonings or set aside its conclusions.

Dr. Muir begins with quoting at some length the expressed views of both parties to the controversy, — of Wilson and Goldstücker upon the one side, of Roth, Benfey, and Müller upon the other. He then proceeds to inquire what signs are discoverable in the Indian literature of a tradition respecting the meaning of the Veda handed down continuously from the earliest times. Such signs ought to be found, if anywhere, in the Brahmanas, the class of writings standing next in antiquity to the hymns, and held sacred like the latter themselves. But the best authorities agree that the spirit of the Brahmanas is separated from that of the older hymns by a wider gulf than from the more modern religious literature, — that the grand breach of continuity lies precisely here. These works, in fact, concern themselves only to a very limited extent with casting light upon their predecessors, and their success, when they attempt the task, is not such as to lead us greatly to regret their usual reticence; their misapprehensions and deliberate perversions of their text, their ready invention of tasteless and absurd legends to explain the allusions, real or fancied, which it contains, their often atrocious etymol-

ogies, are clear evidence that the spirit of the later time, which has always cared infinitely more about the letter than about the meaning of the Veda, was already dominant in the Hindu priesthood. Where, now, shall the primitive and unbroken tradition have begun, if it is unknown to the authors of the Brahmanas? But even the task of collecting and sifting the exegetic material, such as it is, which these treatises contain, is yet to be done by us; the commentators do not found themselves upon it; it is only occasionally referred to by them.

Next, Dr. Muir takes up the Nirukta of Yaska, our earliest extant specimen of native exegesis, the beginning of that series of works which at last found its culmination in the commentaries. He briefly describes its character and content, and extracts from it some of those curious discussions and accounts of schools of Vedic interpretation to which we have above alluded. From this point onward, the great bulk of his paper is taken up with the quotation and discussion of an extended series of Vedic passages, along with their interpretation as given in the Nirukta and in Sayana's commentary; in the course of which are made abundantly to appear the loose, arbitrary, and often carelessly blundering method of these alleged representatives of an immemorial and authoritative tradition, their inconsistencies with themselves and with one another, their dependence upon grammatical and etymologic science for whatever light they cast upon the texts, and their frequent foisting upon these texts of the ideas and beliefs belonging to a later time. To follow him into the details of the discussion is not, of course, in our power here. His main conclusion is, that "there is no unusual or difficult word or obscure text in the hymns in regard to which the authority of the Indian scholiast should be received as final, [or his interpretation accepted,] unless it be supported by probability, by the context, or by parallel passages"; and that "it follows, as a necessary corollary, that no translation of the Rig-Veda which is based exclusively on Sayana's commentary can possibly be satisfactory."

This being established, he at once proceeds to point out that the labors of the commentators have by no means been useless

to us ; that, on the contrary, they have “ been of the utmost service in facilitating and accelerating the comprehension of the Veda ” ; that they have led us by a short cut to much knowledge which would else have cost long and painful investigation ; and that they are worthy of being constantly consulted by the European who is grappling with the same difficulties which they attempt to solve. In all this we fully agree with him ; but we agree not less heartily when he goes on yet further to state, that after all we derive from them little or nothing which we should not sooner or later have found out without their aid. How should the case be otherwise ? Their basis of interpretation, as was shown from Professor Roth’s paper, is not different from our own. We know the Sanskrit language, as they did ; we have in our hands the materials for comprehending the Hindu institutions, even as these were comprehended by them. In both departments, indeed, we may readily acknowledge that they had in some respects the advantage of us ; but in other respects we have still more clearly the advantage of them. We can hardly hope to make ourselves so familiarly and vernacularly acquainted with their classic idiom as were the Brahmans who were trained in it from boyhood, and had given the undivided labor of years to the task of mastering the intricacies of its grammar in their own text-books ; nevertheless, for the purposes of a comparison of dialects, we command the Sanskrit far more thoroughly than they. All the methods and appliances of comparative grammar are at our disposal, and we can bring to the task an enlightened penetration, and a coolness and justness of judgment, to which neither the Hindus nor any other ancient people could make pretence. So, too, and yet more especially, the creeds and ceremonies of Brahmanic India were intimately known to them in a thousand particulars which are obscure to us ; but this, again, is more than compensated by the prepossession with which their minds were filled in favor of these very institutions, and by their disposition to see in the antiquities of their country more of themselves and their belongings than really existed there. The historic faculty was too thoroughly wanting in the Hindu mind for Hindu scholars to be trustworthy students of the past. If they had owned

the disposition and the power to reconstruct the fabric of ancient days, the Sanskrit literature would not be, as it is, without a vestige of a chronology, and with only a mass of paltry fables in place of history.

We are fully of opinion, therefore, that the help of the commentaries was dispensable to us. We shall not finally know appreciably more of the Veda than we should know, if such works had never been compiled. It is even doubtful whether we should not already by this time have known without them as much as we in fact know; whether the facilities they offered us at the start are not more than counterbalanced by the concentration upon them of labor which might have been given to the texts themselves, and by the delay which they have wrought in the publication of the latter. Thus, when Müller's magnificent quarto edition of the Rig-Veda and its commentary, commenced under the auspices of the East India Company, and continued under those of the British government, was first taken in hand, about 1847, a few months would have been amply sufficient for laying before the world the whole text. As it is, after twenty years, little more than two thirds has yet been placed in our hands by Professor Müller. The students of the Veda long waited with despairing hope, while the work, with this heavy clog upon it, was wearily dragging its slow length through the press; until at last other scholars undertook to come to their relief, and give them access to the material they needed; and now it is Aufrecht who is the true editor of the Veda, while Müller has to content himself with the secondary honor of being the editor of Sayana. He who has made much use of the commentary has had ample opportunity to observe that it accompanies and aids his investigations admirably, so long as he has perfectly plain sailing; but the moment a serious difficulty arises, he is left to his own resources; his helper is either more at a loss than himself, or offers him counsel which is impertinent and worthless.

The paper by Professor Müller, the third in our series, is a highly important contribution to the controversy we are reviewing, although it carefully avoids a controversial form, and is toned throughout as if the questions upon which it bears had

never been made the theme of animated dispute. Its author has issued within the year a prospectus of a complete version of the Rig-Veda, which he has long had in hand, and has now gotten nearly ready for publication (it is understood that the first volume is on the point of leaving the press); and here, *à propos* of a simple acknowledgment which he wishes to give of the kindness of a friend in furnishing him new manuscript material for his other great work, — the editing of Sayana's commentary, — it occurs to him to offer, in advance, a kind of sample of the way in which his translation is to be executed. He selects for the purpose a series of four hymns out of the tenth and last book of the Rig-Veda. These, by the Hindu tradition, are connected together, as having arisen out of a single historical occurrence, which the traditionists relate in full. Müller first reports the story in its several and not a little discordant versions, — for the most part, also, giving the text of each version. A king has discarded his former officiating priests, — Subandhu and his three brothers, — and has taken two new ones in their place. The holy men thus supplanted have used incantations against the life of the king, to which the latter's new friends have retorted with still more powerful charms, — with such effect, indeed, as to destroy the life of one of the offenders. Hereupon the beaten party compose and sing the four hymns in question, for the purpose of calling the spirit of their brother back to life; and they succeed in their endeavor. These are the essential features of the legend, as given by the commentators; and every one must, perforce, acknowledge that it wears an aspect of wonderful verisimilitude, as if reported by a faithful and immemorial tradition, perhaps from the very lips of the man so strangely witched out of the world and witched into it again. Müller then goes on to translate the hymns in strict conformity with their interpretation by Sayana, as made to fit the legend. But, having thus done all that could be required of a translator of the one school, he passes over to the other, and commences criticising his own work. He points out some of the more flagrant cases in which Sayana's version militates against grammar and good sense and distorts the plain purport of the text. He analyzes the legend, chases it up from one authority to another,

and shows how it has become transformed from the simple shape it wore in the oldest record to that which we have given above,—how it all grew up by successive accretions, with the help of blundering interpretations of words and phrases occurring in the text. The names of the king, his people, his two new priests, and their despatched and revived adversary, appear to him to be fabricated out of epithets which in fact have quite other meanings. Moreover, the whole story has as little adaptedness to the real content of the hymns as it has possible accordance with sober fact: it is neither *vero* nor *ben trovato*. Finally, we receive a new version of the whole series of verses, made in independence of the commentator; their disconnectedness is pointed out, and it is made to appear that the hymns are put together, in part, out of fragments having a different scope and intent.

In these three papers we have the case of the anti-comment party drawn out in all desirable fulness, and illustrated from every point of view: Professor Roth stating the general considerations which apply in all cases of the traditional interpretation of ancient texts; Dr. Muir illustrating those principles by the fullest and most detailed examination of the particular interpreters whose authority is called in question; Professor Müller exemplifying, upon a connected portion of the Veda, the two modes of interpretation, and contrasting their results. Now let us see what is urged upon the other side.

The first scholar who criticised unfavorably the rising school of Vedic interpretation in Europe, and attempted to cast discredit upon its results, was Professor H. H. Wilson of Oxford and London. He had been educated as a Sanskritist in India, and had won a highly honorable name by his labors upon the later Sanskrit literature: a literature in which artificial conceits and labored obscurity unfortunately play no insignificant part, and commentaries are often absolutely essential to the progress of the student; where works are cast in a form intended for learned exposition, and an author sometimes adds to his own enigmatically terse text a written exposition which shall render its meaning accessible to others. Study of the Veda was not taken up in Europe until Wilson was already an old man, with his views and habits of study fixed by long cus-

tom. His patronage and influence were very freely given to the new branch of research into Hindu antiquity, and were of essential aid to its progress: it would ill become any Vedic scholar to speak disparagingly of his services. But his merits are so great and universally acknowledged, in so many departments, that his friends can well afford to see his weaknesses plainly pointed out. He was never in real sympathy with the spirit of the scholars he had assisted; he distrusted their methods of independent inquiry, and rejected the conclusions they arrived at. It was too late for him to make himself a Vedic scholar in their sense, even if he had understood the requirements of Vedic scholarship as they did. The commentaries were the spectacles through which his disposition and training led him to look at those ancient texts, and he persistently credited and defended their sufficiency. To what an extreme he carried his transfer of the conditions belonging to the later and artificial periods of Hindu literature to the early and spontaneous epoch of the hymns is shown most clearly by a highly curious passage (too long for quotation here) in the Preface to the second volume of his translation of [Sayana's version of] the Rig-Veda. He there seriously lays it down as an acceptable doctrine, that only a tradition established by the authors of the hymns themselves, and handed down from their times to the present, could give us the intent of their epithets and elliptical phrases; that, if a Vedic poet spoke, for example, of "the crooked," or "the broad and golden," he uttered a riddle to which he alone could furnish the clew: — as if such expressions must not have their ground and find their explanation in their own inherent significance and applicability, and in the habits of speech, the current associations, of the period! It were quite as sensible to maintain, that, when an English poet speaks of "the deep," or "the briny," he must needs establish a tradition, lest after generations should have no means of knowing what noun had to be supplied; that Longfellow and Tennyson, — or, to put it more strongly, Emerson and Browning, — when they turn off a verse, whisper its esoteric meaning in the ears of a select number of disciples, by whose pious care it shall be set plainly before the apprehension of our descendants a thousand years hence. Even Wilson, however,



as Dr. Muir has abundantly pointed out, was not so slavishly obsequious to the commentators in practice as in theory. The instances are by no means rare of his calling attention to the unsatisfactory character of Sayana's explanations of particular words or phrases, to his inconsistency with himself or his discordance with other commentators, to his forcing upon his text ideas that are the acknowledged growth of a later time; and if he had been a younger man, there is no telling to what lengths of unbelief these heretical beginnings might have led him.

Since the death of Wilson, his mantle rests upon the shoulders of Dr. Theodor Goldstücker, Professor of Sanskrit in University College, London, author of the fourth paper whose title we have set at the head of this article. The paper was intended as a direct reply to the one by Dr. Muir which we have already considered. We have in our hands, it is true, at present, only an abstract of it: but, on the one hand, this abstract is very full and well digested, bearing every mark of having been drawn up by the author himself, and doubtless presenting with trustworthy correctness the main points of his argument; and, on the other hand, having waited in vain for more than a year for the appearance of the article in its completeness, and knowing by experience that its author is apt to find himself forced by circumstances to much longer delays in the publication of his works than he or others had anticipated, we do not feel that we need refrain from bringing it, in the shape it wears, as an authentic document, into the discussion.

In considering, then, the argument of Professor Goldstücker, we have first to notice, that, in more than one important respect, the title which he has prefixed to it is ill chosen. He styles it "On the Veda of the Hindus and the Veda of 'the German School.'" Herein is involved an evident *petitio principii*. The question is not between the Veda of the German school (or however else we may choose to call it), on the one hand, and the Veda of the Hindus, on the other. The Veda of the Hindus, in the proper sense, is what both parties are alike trying to comprehend; and whether its comprehension shall be most surely arrived at through the methods of modern Hindu

scholarship, or of modern European, is the point which we are endeavoring to determine. It would be only a similar assumption of the other party to entitle its argument "The Veda of the Hindus *versus* the Veda of the Hindu Schools." Let Professor Goldstücker, if he would be fair, acknowledge as his theme, "The Veda of the Hindu Schools, and the Veda of the European School: which is the true Veda?"

Again, what we have here called the European school, as representing the established methods of modern European archæology and philology, Professor Goldstücker knows throughout as "the German school," always putting the words into quotation marks, and claiming that he borrows them from Dr. Muir. We have looked through the latter's paper, however, with considerable care, for the express purpose of discovering this title, and have failed to find that he employs it in a single instance. We would not venture to deny that it may lie hidden there, in some obscure corner that has escaped our search, or that Dr. Muir may have let it drop in the oral communication of his paper, while excluding it, as on the whole objectionable, from the paper as printed. But even this could constitute no justification of the way in which Professor Goldstücker makes use of it. He emphasizes it, dwells upon it, reiterates it three or four times in a paragraph, as if there lay in the words themselves some potent argument against the views he is opposing. Any uninformed person would say, we are confident, that he was making an unworthy appeal to English prejudice against foreign men and foreign ways; there can be no question, that, whether by his intention or not, his language directly tends to excite, and array upon his own side, whatever of such prejudice may exist among his hearers and readers. We are not at all willing to credit, that, being himself a German domiciled in England, he can have done anything consciously to "foul his own nest," as the saying is; but we might fairly have expected him to take more pains to avoid whatever could possibly have an effect that way. Nor are we ready to believe that any one whose suffrage he would value is liable to be swerved from a correct judgment by national prepossession. That there should exist in the English mind a certain leaven of jealousy of the foreigners who have done so

much more than the English to illustrate the language, history, and antiquities of their own Eastern empire would be only natural; but it must be acknowledged, to their honor, that in general they have risen superior to it, and have shown a liberal readiness to receive both instruction and teachers from abroad: witness the long list, mainly of Germans, (but including even one American, Dr. Fitz-Edward Hall,) who have filled and are filling chairs of Indian study in English institutions of learning. During the past fifty years the whole world has been following the lead of Germany in all departments of philological science, glad and proud to do so. There is no more a "German school" in Vedic study than there is in comparative philology. In both alike, Germans made the effective beginning, and have done the greater part of the work; but, in both alike, the school has become European, and is fast becoming universal. Not to speak of Professor Goldstücker himself as the main, if not the sole, champion of the opposing party, an insurmountable obstacle in the way of any such restriction as he would fain imply in the name "German school" is to be found in the person of Dr. Muir, the most eminent of the Vedic scholars of English birth; and if he would look into other parts of the learned world, he might discover others of the same character.

But our author, while professing to borrow from Dr. Muir the invidious title which the latter does not use, and of which the relative position of the two is the most effective refutation, is at the same time at the pains to show that there is, in very fact, no "German school" at all, in the sense in which his opponent understands the expression,—or would have understood it, if he had employed it. In so doing, he misapprehends, as it appears to us, the whole scope of the controversy. The point at issue is not, whether Roth and Benfey and Muir and Müller have rendered any given Vedic passage in precise accordance with one another, nor even whether any one of them has rendered it correctly, but whether they shall be allowed to translate it, if they can, or leave it untranslated, if they cannot, without obsequious regard to what Sayana may affirm to be its meaning. Must we be content to translate Sayana, or may we do our utmost upon the Veda itself, using Sayana as a means to the

comprehension of its significance, but only as one among many, and one whose value in any particular case is to be judged and determined by ourselves? This is the question with regard to which Professor Goldstücker stands upon one side, and his "German school"—that is to say, all the other Vedic scholars of note in the world—upon the other. He asserts that Roth and Benfey belong to different "schools," because their methods of interpretation (meaning, of course, in details) and their interpretations differ. But in this sense every individual scholar, ancient or modern, Hindu or European, constitutes an independent "school." Weber, he says again, must not be counted in the same school with the others, because, being addicted to contradicting himself, he has once expressed an opinion different from theirs as to the existence of a break in Hindu tradition. This seems to us little better than trifling. Lastly, Müller entirely disagrees with them all; he has lately "distinctly declared, that, in his opinion, three fourths of the whole Rig-Veda had been correctly understood by Sayana, whereas, regarding the remaining fourth, he would often not be able to offer an interpretation of his own." But every other scholar whose name has been mentioned would doubtless be able to say nearly the same thing, varying only as regards the exact proportion of the text which, in his view, Sayana has shown himself capable of interpreting. To compare the Veda and Sayana together, and note that the latter has comprehended the easier parts of it, while of the rest no small part is so difficult that we do not understand it much, if at all, better than he, is a marvellously different thing from taking him for our guide and authority. How Müller actually deals with the commentary has been sufficiently shown above; he speaks of it always with great gentleness, as befits the editor of Sayana to do, but, when it comes to translating, not even Roth or Benfey could pursue a more independent course than he. In his regard for the repute of his Indian predecessors, he comes close upon the verge of misstating his own position toward them, and has, perhaps, fairly exposed it to the risk of being misunderstood by others who should pay more attention to his words than his deeds. Thus, in his paper now under discussion, he says (p. 452) that there is "no neces-

sity for going beyond Sayana's interpretation, whenever that interpretation satisfies both the rules of grammar and the requirements of common sense." Of course not: but this implies the setting up of grammar and common sense, according to our judgment of them, as authorities by which Sayana is to be tried, in order that we may see whether his interpretation should be accepted, — that is to say, the putting him into no better position than that to which he would be relegated even by the extremists of "the German school."

It is quite in vain, then, for Professor Goldstücker to claim Müller's support in his advocacy of the Hindu commentators. We do not see, in fact, that, since the death of Wilson, he can reckon any one but himself upon his own side: he constitutes, solitary and alone, the "anti-German school." Mr. Cowell, the lately elected Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge, has, it is true, dropped an expression or two which have seemed to some to betray an inclination to like views; but we are convinced that it would be doing great injustice to this scholar, considering the thoroughness, enterprise, and freedom of spirit testified by his various publications, to imagine, that, when once fairly entered upon the task of Vedic interpretation, he would long remain in bondage to Indian guides. And certainly no other scholar to whose utterances the learned world is accustomed to pay attention can be rallied by our author under his banner.

But we may go farther, and assert that he is in great danger of being deserted by himself, his only partisan. Dr. Muir, whose acuteness and research almost nothing bearing upon the subject of controversy escapes, directs our attention to quite a number of instances in which the fragment of Goldstücker's Sanskrit Dictionary that has thus far appeared rejects Sayana's interpretations, or pronounces them artificial and forced; exhibiting, as Dr. Muir phrases it, "a certain heretical tendency, . . . which may, perhaps, as [the] Dictionary advances, become by-and-by developed into a more pronounced heterodoxy." If one's feet are once allowed to swerve from the narrow track of exegetical orthodoxy, it is difficult to see upon what firm ground they rest: they are liable to slide away even into the broad road of "German" rationalism.

The controversy, then, assumes a new form ; it is virtually narrowed down to the question, whether Professor Goldstücker alone is to be regarded as qualified to decide when and how far the authority of the commentary is to be set aside, or whether others may also have their opinions respecting it. It does not need to be pointed out, that, with the liberty of private judgment, there comes also a heavy burden of responsibility. Every scholar who puts himself forward as an interpreter must be held to a strict account, and judged according to the learning, acuteness, and good sense displayed in his renderings. There are those, doubtless, (it may not be unfair to refer, as an example, to M. Langlois, author of a complete version of the Rig-Veda in French,) who come so poorly fitted to the work of translation that they do even worse than if they had followed the comment step by step. Ignorant presumption may show itself in the one direction, not less than comfortable indolence of spirit and bigoted submission to authority in the other ; yet the only way to arrive at the truth in the end is to permit and encourage freedom of independent interpretation. Nothing is gained to Professor Goldstücker's cause by casting in the face of the other party the discordance of each one's version with that of his comrades ; all that is fully foreseen and provided for in their system ; there is not one among them who fails distinctly to point out that conjecture — or, as their antagonists would contemptuously style it, guess-work — must, for a long time to come, play a considerable part in our attempts at translation, as it demonstrably has done in those of the Hindus ; that certainty will in some parts never be attained, and in others will come only as the result of successive approximations. The analogy of the Homeric and Biblical studies has been repeatedly appealed to by way of illustration ; and Vedic scholars have been content to anticipate the solution of the last difficulty offered them by their theme at an interval after the last passage of the Greek poet or of the Hebrew narrators and prophets shall have ceased to be the subject of controversy, at least not more extended than that which separates the beginnings of Sanskrit philology from those of Greek and Hebrew exegesis. This may seem to some a not altogether encouraging prospect ; yet few, we hope, will be inclined to

escape from it by subjection to the infallible authority of a Hindu commentator.

Let us now look a little at the specific replies made by the champion of the commentators to the allegations of their opponents. He justly characterizes as "the most important argument of Mr. Muir against the value of the native commentaries" the exhibition of the alternative explanations—one, two, three, or even more—given by them in numberless instances for the same word or passage. What is this argument alleged to prove? Of course, that there was in existence in India no authoritative tradition, coming down from the period of the hymns themselves, and teaching with certainty their true meaning, which must have been one, and not many; but that the later Hindus were reduced to erudite methods of exegesis, to etymologic inference, and, when that failed them, to conjecture; and that they applied these methods with a degree of success depending, in different cases, on the difficulty of the problem in hand, and the learning and acuteness which they brought to its solution,—often giving the right interpretation, but sometimes also the wrong, and very frequently unable to satisfy themselves which of two or more suggested versions was the true one. Professor Goldstücker would fain set aside this argument by pleading that the alternative explanations *may* represent the views of different schools of Vedic study in India; nay, leaping in the space of a single line from a possibility to an almost certainty, he asserts that they "must probably" be so accounted for. A most unfortunate reply; for it involves a full admission of the truth of the very argument against which it is brought. It is a matter of indifference to Dr. Muir and his side whether the discordant versions reported by Yaska and Sayana be the products of their own unassisted ingenuity, or whether each had a separate paternity, and was backed by a whole school of commentators, or a dozen schools; in either case their presentation is equally conclusive against the existence of the claimed authoritative tradition, and the trustworthiness of the reporting commentator as a guide for us to follow. He who is curious as to the history of Hindu learning may pay what heed he pleases to them; he who strives simply to know what the Veda means can only look at them

with curiosity as so many guesses, among which some one may possibly point the way to his own. After the admission here made, we see not what ground Professor Goldstücker any longer has to stand upon in his contest with “the German school.”

Again, he states Roth’s principles of interpretation to “consist in deriving the sense of Vedic words ‘from a juxtaposition of all the passages cognate in diction or contents’ in which such words might occur”; and he proceeds at once to point out “that the determining of cognateness of Vedic passages in diction, which, if it means anything, means their grammatical cognateness, was one of the most difficult problems of Vedic philology,—a problem which, so far from having been solved, has as yet not even been propounded; and that it was begging, therefore, the question, if a writer founded an interpretation of words on that which, at present at least, was an unsolved difficulty.” We must confess, that, much as we have pondered this passage, setting it in every light and contemplating it from every point of view, it remains to us, as at first, totally unintelligible. We have no distinct idea of what our author is driving at. Any answer on our part, therefore, must necessarily be waived until the complete publication of his paper shall make clear his meaning, and enable us to see what is this awful question of the “determination of the grammatical cognateness of Vedic passages,” which even he, deep as have been his studies in the Veda, has as yet ventured only reverently to recognize, but not to propound. Meanwhile, however, we cannot but think that the simple comparison of parallel passages (though a very different thing, no doubt, from the other) may still be made a useful means of arriving at their respective intent. It has been applied, so far as we are aware, with a very tolerable degree of success, in nearly every language on earth excepting the Vedic,—in languages new and old, well known and obscure; it is the principal method by which we elicit the meaning of a difficult expression in a German, a Greek, or a Sanskrit author, of a phrase in Egyptian hieroglyphics or in Assyrian cuneiform; and until Professor Goldstücker, or some one else, shall show good cause why it should be excluded from the treatment of the Vedic dialect of the Sanskrit, we suspect that great difficulty will be found in preventing incautious scholars



from resorting to it, under the deluding influence of so much fancied authority.

But Professor Goldstücker goes on further to show, "that a method like that laid down by Professor Roth could be called scientific only on the assumption that all the Vedic hymns belonged to the same period of time, and to the same author," whereas it is admitted that they actually cover different periods, more or less distant from one another. "Classical philologists, he said, would laugh to scorn a method which, without so much as a settled grammatical basis," (that is, we presume, without having previously propounded and determined the question of the grammatical cognateness of its passages,) "would pompously propose to derive the unknown sense of Greek or Latin words from a juxtaposition of passages belonging to different authors, and distant epochs of Greek or Latin literature." We heartily join with our author in deprecating the introduction of the contemplated proposal with any pompousness. He who should attempt to give himself airs on the score of bringing forward a suggestion so essentially obvious and commonplace would deserve at least to be broadly smiled at. If the risibles of classical philologists are so easily provoked, and on such subjects, we hardly know whether most to regret that we do not form a member of so hilarious a body, or to rejoice that our ordinary proceedings are not liable to an accompaniment of jeers from our associates; for, although we never heard of their settling their grammatical basis in any such way as our author appears to contemplate, we feel confident that the classicists are all the time doing what he pronounces fit matter for scornful laughter. There is not a Grecian among them all who, instead of resorting to a Modern Greek professor, or even to an Alexandrian critic, to get upon authority the meaning of an obscure word in Homer, for instance, would not search through the whole Greek literature, and even, if his knowledge extended so far, through the vocabularies of other tongues akin to the Greek, for possible light to be cast upon it. Professor Goldstücker seems inclined to assume that no word which has any variety of meanings, or which has had a history of development of meaning, can have its meanings determined or its history drawn out by the com-

parison of parallel passages, — that is to say, by studying it in the whole sphere of its use. If this were so, the applicability of the method would indeed be reduced wellnigh to nullity, for there are few words in any language that have a narrowly restricted and persistent individuality. But surely it is not so. The practised philologist, if he have material enough, knows how to mark out and set in order the whole territory of significance covered by the word he is studying; and it is only the practised and scientific philologist who can do this, though the word belong to his own vernacular speech. Our author's plea would be more effective, if, on the one hand, there had been any disposition on the part of European scholars to slight the element of variety and growth of signification in Vedic words, or, on the other hand, any disposition on the part of Hindu scholars clearly to recognize and duly to allow for it. The fact we believe to be just the other way. If any Hindu exegete, grammarian, or lexicographer has succeeded in drawing out an acceptable scheme of the meanings of any Sanskrit word, according to their true internal connection, we, at least, have never been so fortunate as to fall in with it; nor do we discern in the discordance of Hindu interpretations of the Veda any traces of such schemes. We are warned, indeed, by Professor Goldstücker, that "words may have different meanings in different passages, and the merely individual impression derived by a scholar from the context of what might constitute to his mind a justification of such a variation is far too unsafe a criterion to be made the basis for narrowing the meanings of words." This sounds very well; yet, after all, the variation has its limits, and somebody must be allowed to decide in a given case whether an alleged worldwide discordance of meaning be fairly attributable to historical development or to the ignorance and arbitrariness of the interpreter. No scholar possessing any independence of mind can help criticising the authorities upon whom he is asked to rely; and when the student of the Veda finds the commentators explaining a word or phrase as meaning, in one and the same passage, (to take a few instances almost at random from Dr. Muir's pages,) either 'having the lightning for a weapon' or 'supporter of creatures,' either 'taken with the hand' or 'hav-

ing rays,' either 'with full neck' or 'to be praised by many,' either 'having cattle' or 'perceiving what is minute,' either 'thy riches are most gladdening' or 'thy kinsmen are most destructive,' either 'persons who are sacrificing around' or 'birds which are flying around,' either 'swift' or 'a buck yoked in front,' and when he further finds a like diversity of meanings ascribed to the same word or phrase in different passages, we submit that he cannot long hesitate to which class of causes he is to ascribe both the one and the other.

At the end, Professor Goldstücker promises that the sequel of his paper shall show, by a detailed discussion of the proceedings of "the German school," that the scholars who compose it cannot be "considered as having at all contributed to, or even facilitated, the solution of really difficult and doubtful points of Vedic exegesis." This is a very bold and comprehensive promise, and the learned world—or, at least, that part of it which is interested in the study of Indian antiquity—will be apt to look pretty sharply to see how it is fulfilled. Since we have shown that the "school" comprises all the known Vedic students except Professor Goldstücker himself, and that even he is, without acknowledging it to himself, not wholly at variance with them as regards the one principle which unites them as a school, the question at issue (as already hinted) becomes virtually a personal one, wearing this form: "Is there a scholar in the world, save Professor Goldstücker, who is capable of judging when Sayana's interpretations are to be accepted as authoritative, and when they may be set aside and superseded?" We hardly think that he would shrink from putting it thus; at the beginning as well as the end of his paper, he appears rather to court than to shun a personal contest, reproaching Dr. Muir with failing to add to his intended proof of the untrustworthiness of Yaska and Sayana further proof that their opponents were any better than they; "for," he says, "even if their labors were worthless, it might at least be possible that those of 'the German school' were yet more worthless." Nor would the assumption involved in such a formulation of the question as we have proposed be perceptibly greater than that exhibited by the same scholar a dozen years ago, when, being himself quite unknown as a

Sanskritist to the world at large, (he had not at that time, so far as we are aware, published any contributions to Sanskrit literature excepting prospectuses, including one of a rival dictionary,) he boldly condemned, as worse than worthless, the great St. Petersburg Lexicon, edited by the veteran scholars Böhtlingk and Roth, and contributed to by many of the leading Sanskritists of Germany, and suggested that the part of it already published should be cancelled, and the work begun anew. Since then, indeed, he has shown his powers in a variety of ways ; and no one, we believe, will be now found to question his immense learning, his minute accuracy, and the sincerity and intensity of his convictions. These are qualities which, if combined with a due share of sound sense and critical judgment, must give a high value to whatever he shall bring forth in the way of animadversion upon the results of Vedic scholars, and may establish his claim to be ranked among their number (for we cannot allow that denunciation of his fellows and worship of Hindu predecessors make one a Vedic scholar). We trust that this will be the case, and that his criticisms will prove a solid and instructive contribution to Vedic exegesis. But we can already say, with a confidence amounting to certainty, that, if it be so, it will be because he adopts and carries out the method of those to whom he opposes himself in a better manner than they themselves have done ; because he shows good and sufficient reason for regarding their interpretations as less acceptable than others which may be proposed, — even, in certain cases, than those of the commentators themselves. And though he may thus rehabilitate some part of Sayana's work, he cannot reinstate Sayana in the place of paramount authority which has been claimed for him ; to attempt it is to fight against the whole spirit of modern philology, of modern inquiry in every department ; this has broken the yoke of too many an asserted authority to submit itself blindly to the lead of Hindu guides. The so-called "principles" of "the German school" consist solely in the application to Vedic studies of the well-established and tested methods of modern critical research ; when they are abandoned, men will also be ready to go back to a belief in the fables of Livy respecting the oldest history of Rome, or in those of the

early chroniclers respecting the settlement of England by Brut and his Trojans. Professor Goldstücker's attacks have not, so far as we can perceive, shaken them in a single particular. He may go on now to point out discordances between the interpretations of the different representatives of the school,—discordances, perhaps, even approaching in degree to those of the versions which Sayana sets side by side, comfortably leaving to his readers the responsibility of judging and choosing among them: but this will not help the argument; it will not even result in putting the modern and the ancient interpreters in one category together. Only he who (or his friends for him) shall thrust himself forward as an authoritative guide, and assert his own results to be infallible and final, can be looked upon as occupying a kindred position with that of Sayana, and as needing, like him, to have his claims proved unfounded and set aside.

Nearly all our valuable knowledge of the Veda is due to the labors of "the German school." Even Colebrooke, vast as was his learning and acute his insight, beholding these ancient records through the eyes of the native scholars, was far from appreciating their significance, and closed his famous essay "On the Vedas" with a discouragement to their study; and they remained for more than a generation longer mere literary curiosities, little heeded by students either of India or of humanity. The results drawn from them by German scholars have already won a universal value; they have passed into the possession of the world, as an essential part of its knowledge and conception of ancient times. If the study is to continue to flourish, and to complete its important work, it must be true to the same methods which it has thus far so successfully pursued.

W. D. WHITNEY.